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1 out of 4 lung cancer patients in Andalusia does not receive the radiotherapy they need

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A study conducted by University of Granada and Virgen de las Nieves U.H. researchers has revealed that in Andalusian public hospitals radiotherapy is provided to lung cancer patients with a frequency 25 % below that established by clinical protocols. Failure to provide such treatment results in a total of 3,000 survival-day loss for all lung cancer patients.

To carry out this study –recently published in the *Journal of Thoracic Oncology*–, the researchers reviewed the medical records and radiotherapy provided to all lung cancer patients in 2007 in the 12 Andalusian public hospitals fitted with radiotherapy facilities. Data were grouped by type of hospital, patient, type of treatment, histological type and tumor stage. This is very relevant, since other studies used aggregated data and interviews.

A Study with 3,051 Patients

Of the 3,051 lung cancer patients, 610 (radiation rate: 20 %) were initially treated with radiotherapy when according to the patients' medical histories, the number of patients treated with radiotherapy should have been 1,383. Thus, 773 lung cancer patients (25%) did not receive the radiotherapy they needed.

According to the University of Granada professor José Expósito Hernández, radiotherapy is "crucial to the treatment of lung cancer and, according to the literature available, the percentage of patients that "must" receive radiotherapy can be established by the tumor stage, the histological type and other considerations". The studies conducted by the Canadian professor Mackillop –with whom the University of Granada researchers have worked– estimate the benefits of radiotherapy for each patient in terms of survival months.

This article analyzes by regression tests the variables that influence the decision to provide or not radiotherapy to a patient. "Such decision may be based both, on equipment deficiencies (radiotherapy units and specialists) and on the specialist's preferences", professor Hernandez states.

Source: University of Granada

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